



Affirmation:

JUNE 1982

United Methodists for Gay and Lesbian Concerns

RECEIVED
FEB 23 2024

REPORT FROM MINN.:

BISHOP WHEATLEY VINDICATED

"Affirmation is alive and well ~~and~~ thriving!" is the report from the National Spring meeting, held April 16-18 in Minneapolis, MN. An enthusiastic and hardworking group of persons attended the meeting and accepted the task of shaping the path of Affirmation for the next two years. The agenda was full, but the group found time for nurture and conversation over hardy "whole--wheat Minne-snotan" meals (homecooked by participants).

The meeting began Friday evening with an event sponsored by Affirmation for its members and the gay and lesbian community of Minneapolis. Up and Over, a feminist theatre group performed Journey, a production that explored the spiritual, psychological and physical horror suffered by victims of rape. The evening concluded with the music of gay singer/song writer Tom Wilson.

The major task of the weekend was planning the work of Affirmation for the coming two years. This task included acting on the report of the Organizational Style/Nominating Committee. Response to the report involved selecting the Coordinating Committee for 1982-1984 and implementing a new structure which assigns Affirmation work to five regional task forces. (see articles elsewhere in newsletter.) The task forces include Nurturing, National Church, Communication, Education, and Fundraising. A block of time was spent in brainstorming the work of these task forces, though the actual content of work will be open to the creativity of the task force members.

A letter of support to Bishop Melvin Wheatley was drafted and sent by representatives of Affirmation. (see article elsewhere in newsletter for response to this issue.)

Serious attention was given to the financial status of Affirmation. The work of Affirmation, it was learned, is being hampered by a lack of funds. In fact, we are in the hole! Each Affirma-

(cont. on p. 6)

Bishop Melvin E. Wheatley Jr. of Denver has not violated the doctrinal standards nor the order and discipline of the United Methodist Church in his statements and actions on the issue of homosexuality, a jurisdictional investigative committee of the denomination ruled in Los Angeles May 21. The Western Jurisdiction Committee on Investigation said in a seven-page report it found no "reasonable grounds" for accusations against the bishop.

When asked about Affirmation's response Morris Floyd, Affirmation's official spokesperson said, "We were of course gratified that the Western Jurisdiction Committee on Investigation did not sustain the charges against Bishop Wheatley. By so doing they added further clarity to the decision of the 1980 General Conference which kept responsibility for decision-making about ministerial relations at the Annual Conference level, where it belongs.

"The careful, respectful statement of the Committee stands in stark contrast to the narrow bigoted and therefore un-Christ-like position of some of those criticizing its decision. We urge local churches, districts and annual conferences to act on the Committee's recommendation for continuing loving dialogue. We believe that God is calling the Church to increased faithfulness to the Gospel by leading toward greater openness to the full participation of gay men and lesbians in its life and ministry. We call upon those in our fellowship who apply to themselves the name 'Good News' to frame their statements in the loving spirit of the One who truly is good news for all God's people.

"The vindication of Bishop Wheatley is a source of great personal satisfaction to us. His courage and determination reflect the grace God gives to those who lead in difficult and controversial matters."

Coordinating Committee

Mark Bowman, Morris Floyd, Mary Gaddis, Lyle Loder, Ava Scott and Leanne Tigert were elected at the spring national meeting to guide the work of Affirmation for the next two years. Two members of the Coordinating Committee will act as Affirmation's spokespersons: Morris Floyd and one of the women, still to be determined. Each Coordinating Committee member will work with one of the five task forces, serving as liaison for purposes of clear communication, unified direction and comprehensive input.

A ten-member Coordinating Committee was originally called for, made up of an equal number of women and men and including persons of various ages and

ethnic groups who have a spirit of openness and energy to invest in the work of Affirmation. Since the nominating committee was able to complete a slate of only six persons, the new Coordinating Committee is charged with the responsibility of filling the other four positions, keeping in mind the stated criteria.

The effectiveness of the Coordinating Committee will depend in part on the support they receive from Affirmation members and the quality of work our five task forces contribute. The Coordinating Committee members need our suggestions, our encouragement, our hard work and our financial support.

NEW! TASK FORCES

An exciting new format designed to broaden Affirmation's base of leadership and input was implemented at the meeting in Minneapolis. A major block of time was spent in making suggestions for and organizing five task forces to do the work of Affirmation for the next two years. Major work areas were organized into five task forces to be handled by five regionally-based groups. In order to insure nationwide communication and coordination each group will work with a member of the Coordinating Committee.

Task force assignments were made and accepted based on expressed local interest and most favorable geographic location. Suggestions were made about possible goals and responsibilities of each task force, but final working plans will be the prerogative of the responsible local group. Following are descriptions of the task forces as developed at the planning session.

I. NURTURING.....Chicago
Chicago's group will work on gay/lesbian networking and nurturing on a national level. Possible areas of attention will be to:

- "enable" personal contacts for persons with specific needs
- affirm diversity within the gay/lesbian community
- follow up on gay/lesbian regional and national meetings and conferences
- assist formation of local support

groups (design a packet for this purpose)

II. COMMUNICATION.....Nashville

The Communication task force will provide support services through written materials. Their tasks include:

- publishing the Affirmation newsletter four times a year
- issuing press releases
- sharing news and requests from other task forces
- passing on information from local and regional Affirmation groups

III. NATIONAL CHURCH...Washington DC

The National Church task force will work on three major areas:

- (1) 1984 General Conference
 - gather information to help prepare for an Affirmation presence at the 1984 General Conference
 - design and coordinate a "strategy" to utilize at General Conference
 - prepare legislation to submit
- (2) Solidarity with Other Groups
 - identify other justice groups
 - push for a national religious conference on human rights
 - show solidarity with women's and ethnic groups
- (3) Presence with Word/Sacrament
 - make clear affirmation of lesbian/gay clergy
 - develop covenant statement with supportive churches

CONFERENCE OF L/G CHRISTIANS

The American Conference of Lesbian and Gay Christians was convened on May 7 in Washington, DC with representatives from 17 organizations across the country. Through the weekend, the 50 delegates worked toward avenues of resource-sharing and coalition-building between the variety of groups they represented.

The delegates struggled initially with the designation of the Conference as "American" and "Christian". These designations were perceived by many as a hindrance to an inclusive interfaith lesbian/gay coalition. The decision was made to proceed with the conference as assembled, but to open future events to all lesbian/gay religious organizations who wish to participate.

The major work of the conference proceeded in two primary arenas: plans for the sharing of existing resources and the construction of a national religious coalition.

Resource needs which were identified and addressed were in liturgy, education and ministry. A small task force was formed to be a "clearinghouse" for liturgical resources which could be utilized by other lesbian/gay religious groups. Another task force began working on the collection of resources to serve as educational tools on issues of racism, sexism, and classism within the lesbian/gay community.

Conference delegates delineated principles and a preliminary framework for what was tentatively called the "North American Lesbian/Gay Religious Congress". The constituting of this organization will occur in Los Angeles November 11-14 1982.

The Major controversy erupted around the delegations which each group would send to the Los Angeles meeting. To demonstrate the delegates' commitment to embody inclusiveness, it was proposed that each national organization could send a maximum of three delegates, one being a woman, and another being a Third World person. After much debate, this proposal was adopted.

The delegates passed several resolutions on religious/political issues of importance to gay/lesbian Christians. Also the delegates agreed to support the reorganization of Insight, the gay/lesbian theological quarterly (see separate article).

Affirmation representatives to the conference were: Sharon Owens, Ava Scott, Candy Shultis, Mark Bowman, Michael Collins, and Brad Rymph. More information on the conference can be obtained from any of them. Sharon will serve as Affirmation's representative to a preliminary meeting in Atlanta in August which will lay the groundwork for the November "constituting" conference.

affirmation economics

Every organization must face the question of "budget" and of how to collect the monies needed to operate the program constituents have decided upon. Affirmation is no different. At the national meeting in Minneapolis, MN in March, the women and men present agreed on the first-draft of a budget. Operating and programmatic expenses for the next two years - through General Conference 1984 in Baltimore - is envisioned at \$25,000. Twenty three people present at the March meeting pledged themselves to contribute \$8000 over the next two years. Those of us who were not at the March meeting need to plan to pledge the remaining amount. Following issues of the Affirmation Newsletter will include detailed information about the AFFIRMATION

PLEDGE DRIVE and how all of us can participate in this important enabling part of Affirmation. At the next national meeting in Boston, the Finance and Fund Raising Task Force will present a revised budget.

Remember: What you are able to pledge to Affirmation enables our gay and lesbian presence and witness within the United Methodist Church and in the world. It is important for the denomination to hear and to see the significant ministries that gay men and lesbians have had, are having, and will continue to have within the church. Begin to think NOW of how much you will be able to pledge to the work of Affirmation when the invitation is issued.

GOINGS ON

SOUTHWEST TEXAS

The Southwest Texas Conference Gay Caucus met with the Conference Board of Church and Society March 19 at Mount Wesley in Kerrville. A session titled "The Church in Dialogue with Homosexuals" featured a panel composed of Rev. Ron Pogue, pastor of Bering Memorial UMC in the Montrose, Houston; Annella Harrison of Parents and Friends of Gays, Houston; and four members of the Southwest Texas Gay Caucus. The Board asked questions of the panel and discussed ways to set up support groups for families of gay/lesbian persons in the Southwest Texas Conference. The Board voted to request of the Conference Nominating Committee that a gay/lesbian person be named to the Board of Church and Society. That person will probably be Troy Stokes of Austin, who has been meeting with the Board this year as an unofficial liaison from the gay/lesbian United Methodist community. The Board of Church and Society also voted to seek approval from Bishop Dixon for a proposed conference on pastoral ministry to gays/lesbians, to be held in the spring of 1983 for pastors and laity throughout the Southwest Texas Conference. The address for the Gay Caucus is [REDACTED], Austin TX [REDACTED].

* * * * *

Mark Your Calendars:

DATES FOR NATIONAL MEETINGS

September 17-19, 1982 BOSTON
April 8-10, 1983 LOS ANGELES
September 16-18, 1983 BALTIMORE
April 27-29, 1984 (tent.) . . . BALTIMORE

SAN FRANCISCO

Affirmation folks in San Francisco have committed themselves to supporting individuals in their struggle for liberation. They see that their ministries must be in response to the needs expressed by gay men and lesbians as they attempt to live their lives in the church and the world. One-to-one, face-to-face relational ministry seems to be the goal of our brothers and sisters in San Francisco.

DENVER

Given the current controversy surrounding Julian Rush in the Rocky Mountain Annual Conference and the courageous stand of Bishop Wheatley, Affirmation folks in the Denver area are finding that their social meetings are developing into more of an activist stance. As they begin to find new ways of confronting institutional/ecclesiastical injustices, other Affirmation groups around the country need to hear of their strategies and tactics and their successes and failures.

(Cont. on p. 6)

COORDINATING COMMITTEE

Mark Bowman

[REDACTED]
Washington, DC [REDACTED]

Morris Floyd

[REDACTED]
Minneapolis, MN [REDACTED]

Mary Gaddis

[REDACTED]
Holy City, CA [REDACTED]

Lyle Loder

[REDACTED]
Los Angeles, CA [REDACTED]

Ava Scott

[REDACTED]
Philadelphia, PA [REDACTED]

Leanne Tigert

[REDACTED]
Brighton, MA [REDACTED]

-INSIGHT-

Do you tire of reading articles in "Christian" magazines and journals which ignore the experience of lesbian and gay Christians? Perhaps you have altogether stopped such reading? Then you have not seen Insight: A Quarterly of Lesbian/Gay Christian Opinion.

Insight has been published as an ecumenical quarterly over the past few years as a vehicle for lesbian/gay Christian thought. Insight has contained: critiques of the churches' homophobia, explorations into gay/lesbian theology, thinking on what it means for us to be faithful community, reviews of current books, news of upcoming events across the country, and other articles.

The most recent copy of Insight was edited by Dr. James Tinney of Howard University and the Pentecostal Coalition for Human Rights. This publication carries articles written by several black lesbians and gay men and explores the dynamics of "Black, Gay, and Christian." This provocative edition is available for \$2.00 from: Insight, [REDACTED] New York, N.Y.

Insight has been struggling with a lack of solid financial support. Fearing that this invaluable resource might be discontinued, a group of concerned representatives from various lesbian/gay Christian groups has been working on re-designing the journal. They have proposed Brian McNaught, Boston syndicated columnist, as editor.

In order to provide a financial base for the journal, Integrity and Dignity are proposing to use it as their "official" journal to be sent to all their members. Other denominational groups are asking their members to subscribe to Insight.

At this time a charter subscription of \$3.50 is being offered to persons who subscribe now. This cost is for one year (four issues) and is a substantial savings over the current subscription price of \$8.00. If you would like to receive Insight and are willing to support its new beginning, please complete the information below and send it, along with your check for \$3.50, to the Affirmation office. We will pass these subscriptions along to Insight as a sign of Affirmation's support.

PLEASE GIVE ME A ONE YEAR SUBSCRIPTION TO INSIGHT AT THE CHARTER RATE OF \$3.50:

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

ENCLOSE YOUR CHECK FOR \$3.50 (payable to Insight) and MAIL TO: Affirmation, [REDACTED] Evanston, Illinois [REDACTED]

It is very important at this time of both enlarged participation and fiscal constraint within Affirmation, that we update our mailing list. Will you help us by returning this form: (we will delete all names from whom we receive no form)

____ I wish to continue receiving the Affirmation newsletter and enclose \$15.00 to cover its annual cost.

I can receive my newsletter copy via bulk rate without envelope.

____ I am unable to contribute the \$15.00 annual cost but do wish to continue receiving the Affirmation newsletter.

____ I request that my Newsletter copy be mailed first class in a plain envelope, and enclose \$20.00 for that.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

PLEASE MAIL CHECK AND/OR COMPLETED FORM

TO: Affirmation, [REDACTED] Evanston, Illinois, [REDACTED]

(Task Forces, Cont. from p. 2)

- putting together a collection of statements affirming the gifts and graces of gay/lesbian clergy persons. The task force will accept statements from gay/lesbian clergy.

IV. EDUCATION.....San Francisco

The Education group will generate information on Affirmation and gay/lesbian issues. Some possible focus points include:

- issuing a purpose statement and brochure about Affirmation
- resourcing the publication of educational packets and pastoral care materials to be used in the local church
- compiling a United Methodist gay/lesbian history
- compiling a curriculum and curriculum guides

V. FUNDING/FUND RAISING...Los Angeles

This task force will handle fiscal matters and fundraising. Efforts to raise operating money will be coordinated by these individuals in cooperation with the treasurer. Some plans discussed were:

- creating a travel pool
- methods of meeting budget needs
- soliciting pledges
- locating donors and sponsors
- drawing up a budget and fundraising strategy to be presented at the Fall National meeting

(Goings On, Cont. from p.4)

NEW YORK CITY

There is no Affirmation chapter/group in the Big Apple, as such. Gay and lesbian United Methodists are participating in an Inter-religious Coalition that focuses on Gay Pride and other gay/lesbian issues significant in the lives of their constituency. As several "evil" people are attempting to disprove the holocaust, lesbians and gay men in NYC are planning to commemorate the Gay/Lesbian Holocaust that has occurred in every period of history as well as in Nazi Germany. They are holding up an important event and issues for the rest of us to incorporate into our regional and national lives.

(Minneapolis, Cont. from p. 1)

tion member present made a firm commitment to solicit financial support to allow Affirmation to operate until the next meeting. There will be, at that time, a financial plan implemented. (see other article)

The tone of the meeting was very positive. Affirming the pain and scars which are a natural product of our human interactions with one another, the group worked together through struggles and crucial issues. A worship experience affirmed our connectedness with the Creator and with each other, recognizing with joy the presence of one another, and with pain the absence of special persons in the life of Affirmation.

The spring meeting of Affirmation planted seeds of hope and determination for an ever-growing, reflecting, challenging two years. Affirmation indeed continues as a channel for action and source of support for folks connected with the struggles of gay men and lesbians both within and on the margins of the United Methodist Church.



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